

Far North

Many overseas travellers arrive in Auckland thinking they have to immediately head south to go tramping in New Zealand – not so. The rugged Cape Reinga, where the Tasman Sea meets the Pacific Ocean, boasts New Zealand's northernmost tramp, a shoreline walk from Ninety Mile Beach to Spirits Bay. Along the way you pass numerous golden beaches that rival those found at Abel Tasman National Park.

There's also a 100km-long network of tracks that winds past hot springs, over mountains and through stunning groves of nikau palms on Great Barrier Island, in the Hauraki Gulf. Thanks to a lack of possums the native bush on this island is as thick, lush and impressive as in any other forest in New Zealand.

Coromandel Forest Park, on the Coromandel Peninsula east of Auckland, includes the popular tramping area of Kauaeranga valley. The valley is an ideal destination for easy tramps to restored kauri dams and historic trestle bridges.

Surrounding Auckland are several areas for day tramps, including the Waitakere Ranges and Rangitoto Island; both are a great introduction to the New Zealand bush and to tramping in this rugged little country.

On these tramps you'll encounter fascinating artefacts from the days of logging, and be challenged by steep climbs that rival any in the North Island. About the only thing lacking is huts – there is only one on Great Barrier Island and another in the Kauaeranga valley. Rent a tent if you have to. These tracks are worth the extra expense.

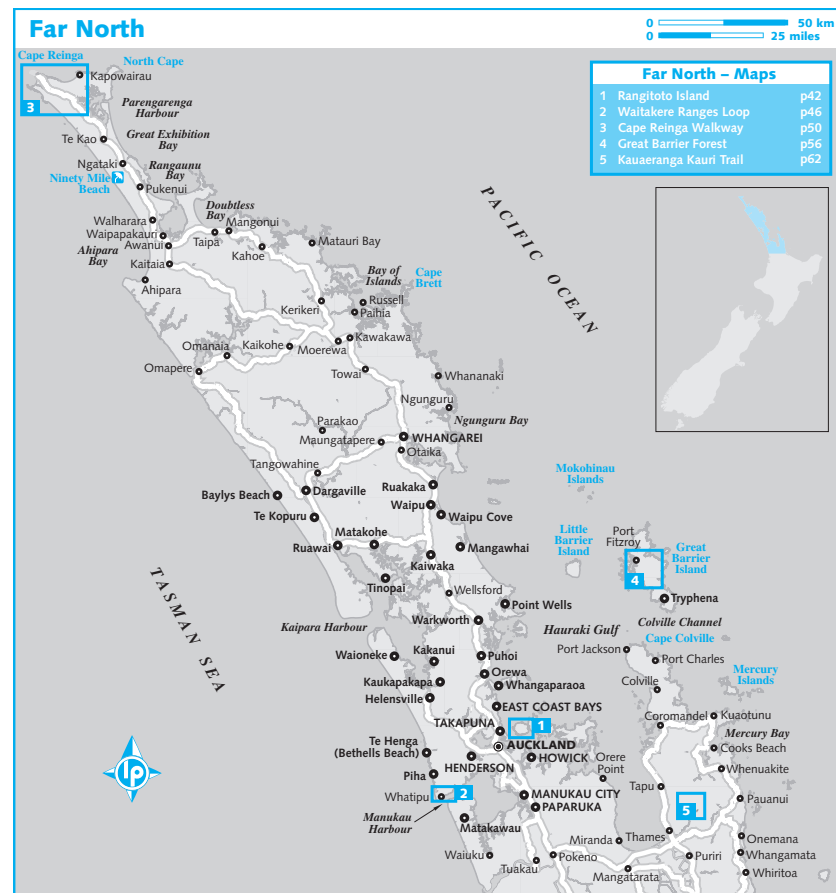
HIGHLIGHTS

- Tramping through black lava fields on the **Rangitoto Island Loop** (p41)
- Beach walking to a pounding surf – hard on the calves, good for the soul – along the **Cape Reinga Walkway** (p47)
- Viewing one of the well-preserved kauri dams in the **Great Barrier Forest** (p53)
- Soothing sore muscles in the **Kaitoke Hot Springs** (p59) in the Great Barrier Forest
- Climbing the **Pinnacles** (p63) for a spectacular view of the Kauaeranga valley on the Kauaeranga Kauri Trail

■ TELEPHONE CODE: 09 & 07

■ www.northlandnz.com

■ www.aucklandnz.com



CLIMATE

The far-north region boasts a mild climate with long dry periods in summer. Temperatures range from almost tropical around the northern tip at Cape Reinga, to an average closer to 20°C around Auckland in summer. The islands northeast of Auckland are often a degree or two warmer, averaging 25°C from December to February and sometimes climbing to 30°C. Winters are moist, with most of the rain falling in June and July.

INFORMATION Maps

A good map for a regional overview is the *AA New Zealand Road Atlas*. Auckland

is the best place to pick up maps for anywhere in New Zealand, both for tramping and driving.

Books

There are a wealth of tramping guides and natural history books that cover the far north in detail. *Untamed Coast* by Bob Harvey presents the history and natural history of the Waitakere Ranges and west-coast beaches, with well-written text accompanied by superb colour photos. *Walking The Waitakere Ranges* by Alison Dench and Lee-Anne Parore covers 30 tramps in the area.

Great Barrier Island, edited by Don Armitage, covers everything from freshwater

fish to geology on New Zealand's fourth-largest island. A detailed guide to 50 tracks on Coromandel Peninsula is *Day Walks of the Coromandel* by Marios Gavalas.

Looking for a way to stretch your legs around Auckland? At visitor information centres pick up *Explore Auckland City's Walkways*, a small booklet packed with day-walk suggestions in the city, or *Walks of Auckland*, which covers the region from Great Barrier Island to the Waitakere Ranges.

GATEWAY Auckland

☎ 09 / pop 1.2 million

Most trampers from abroad not only arrive in Auckland, but often spend a day or two in New Zealand's largest city overcoming jet lag, stocking up on supplies and organising many of their tramps. Auckland is vibrant and cosmopolitan, and there is a surprisingly large number of walks in and around the city.

INFORMATION

Auckland visitor information centre (☎ 363 7182; www.aucklandnz.com; Atrium, Skycity, cnr Victoria & Federal Sts; ☹ 8am-8pm) General tourism information and bookings.

DOC Information Centre (☎ 379 6476; Ferry Bldg, 99 Quay St; ☹ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat). For track and park information. You can also purchase brochures on the most popular tracks in the country, plus maps, books and hut tickets.

Tourism Auckland (☎ 367 6009; cnr Quay & Hobson Sts) General tourism information and bookings.

SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT

If you need to purchase equipment or high-tech clothing, the best option is to head to Queen St, where the selection of outdoor specialists includes **Bivouac** (☎ 366 1966; 210 Queen St; ☹ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Thu, 9am-7pm Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & 10am-4pm Sun), **Kathmandu** (☎ 309 4615; 151 Queen St; ☹ 9am-6pm Mon-Thu, 9am-7pm Fri & 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) and **Snowgum** (☎ 359 9907; 125 Queen St; ☹ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Thu, 9am-7pm Fri & 10am-4pm Sat & Sun).

For park maps or topographic maps for anywhere in the country, there's the excellent **Auckland Map Centre** (☎ 309 7725; www.aucklandmapcentre.co.nz; National Bank Centre, 209 Queen St).

There are numerous large supermarkets in Auckland. Closest to the city centre are

New World (☎ 307 8400; 2 College Hill, Victoria Park) and **Foodtown** (☎ 275 2567; 76 Quay St).

SLEEPING & EATING

Auckland Central Backpackers (☎ 0800-462 396, 358 4877; www.gobeyond.co.nz; 229 Queen St; dm \$24, d \$67-88; ☑) is the largest hostel in New Zealand, with more than 500 beds, a huge Internet café and the lively Globe Bar. There's a buzz to this place day and night.

Xbase (☎ 300 9999; www.basebackpackers.com; 16 Fort St; dm \$24-26, tw/d \$68/80; ☑) is Auckland's newest backpackers, with an affordable café, its own cosy bar and lounge, and a sauna and hot tub up on the roof deck – for post-tramp therapy.

Bamber House (☎ 623 4267; www.hostelbackpacker.com; 22 View Rd, Mt Eden; dm \$23-25, d & tw \$53-57; ☑ ☑) is a large Victorian house with friendly staff and an outdoor pool.

Aspen House (☎ 379 6633; www.aspenhouse.co.nz; 62 Emily Pl; d \$75-99; ☑) is a B&B with shared facilities in the original house, and 29 en suite rooms in a new lodge next door. The hotel is only five minutes' walk from the Britomart bus and train station, and rates includes breakfast.

More upscale is **Great Ponsonby Bed & Breakfast** (☎ 376 5989; www.ponsonbybnb.co.nz; 30 Ponsonby Tce; d \$180-225, studios \$235-295), a really delightful small hotel with a pleasant lounge in one of Auckland's most interesting neighbourhoods.

Ponsonby also has a lively dining scene, with outdoor cafés lining Ponsonby Rd. **SPQR Café & Bar** (☎ 360 1710; 150 Ponsonby Rd; ☹ noon-late Mon-Fri, 10am-late Sat & Sun) spreads out the white tablecloths and then serves up gourmet pizza and large glasses of wine. **Cafe Cezanne** (☎ 376 3338; 296 Ponsonby Rd; ☹ 7.30am-late) is a great little place with wildly painted walls, the best coffee on the block, and vegetarian selections.

In the city centre head to **Atrium** (Elliot St), where you'll find numerous restaurants, and the **Food Gallery** (Crownne Plaza Hotel, Elliot St; ☹ 7am-6pm Mon-Thu, 7am-8pm Fri & 10am-5pm Sat & Sun), with 16 food counters ranging from Vietnamese Delight and Spice of India to the Happy Mussel.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air New Zealand (☎ 0800-737 000; www.airnz.co.nz) is the main airline operating from **Auckland International Airport** (☎ 256 8899; www.auckland-airport.co.nz), which is 21km (35 minutes) south of the city centre. There are also several smaller airlines offering flights to popular tramping areas (see p352), some of which operate out of North Shore airfield, 20 minutes north of the city on SH1.

InterCity Coachlines (☎ 623 1503; www.intercitycoach.co.nz) buses depart from the **Sky City Coach Terminal** (102 Hobson St). Major InterCity routes, with multiple daily departures, include Rotorua (\$55, four hours), Taupo (\$53, five hours), New Plymouth (\$69, six hours) and Wellington (\$68 to \$94, 11 hours).

Tranz Scenic (☎ 0800-872 467; www.tranzscenic.co.nz) operates the only train from Auckland, the **Overlander**, which departs the **Britomart station** (12 Queen St) at 7.25am daily for Wellington (\$119, 11 hours).

Auckland is the best place in New Zealand to hire a car long-term. There are more than 60 rental operators, including the major companies such as **Budget** (☎ 0800-652 227, 976 2270), and cheaper alternatives such as **ARF Rental Cars** (☎ 0508-112 233, 368 5724; www.hirecar.co.nz) and **A2B Rentals** (☎ 0800-616 777; www.a2brentals.co.nz).

RANGITOTO ISLAND LOOP

Duration	4–5 hours
Distance	10km
Track Standard	walking track
Difficulty	easy
Start/Finish	Rangitoto Wharf
Nearest Town	Auckland (opposite)
Transport	boat
Summary	Tramp to the summit of Rangitoto Volcano and then along the coast of the island it created 600 years ago. The views of Auckland are among the best in the area.

Even if you only have a day to spare in Auckland before moving on, seriously consider warming up the tramping legs with this easy, yet fascinating walk in Rangitoto Island Scenic Reserve. Part of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, this 2311-hectare island is only 10km northeast of the city, and features several kilometres of tramping tracks that wind through the black lava fields and around the summit crater of its volcano.

Rangitoto is connected to Motutapu Island by a causeway and, if you take a tent and sleeping bag, you can turn this tramp

into a two-day adventure. At the head of Islington Bay you pick up the Motutapu Walkway on the east side of the causeway, and follow it to the DOC camping ground at Home Bay, a tramp of 1½ hours across farmland and cliff tops. The next day is a 2½-hour tramp back to Islington Bay along farm roads via Administration Bay.

HISTORY

Rangitoto is a relatively young volcano, having emerged from the sea in a series of fiery eruptions only 600 years ago. Maori were living on neighbouring Motutapu Island at the time of the eruptions and Rangitoto's dramatic appearance ensured it would always be an important place in their history and mythology. The island's name is derived from the Maori phrase *Te Rangi tongia a Tamatekapua* (the day the blood of Tamatekapua was shed). Tamatekapua was chief of one of the canoes that brought the early Polynesian settlers. He arrived about 1350 and then lost a major battle with the Tainui at Islington Bay, which lies between Rangitoto and Motutapu Islands.

The Crown purchased Rangitoto in 1854 from the Maori, and during the 1920s and 1930s prisoners built 19km of hard-packed roads and trails on the island, some of which are still in use. Rangitoto's most interesting historic moment was during WWII, when it was used as a base for harbour defence and as a radar station. A handful of the old cement huts and foundations can still be seen along the tracks.

ENVIRONMENT

Rangitoto, the largest of the 50 volcanic cones and craters in the Auckland area, is the only one of its kind in New Zealand. The black basaltic lava that erupted and now constitutes much of the island makes Rangitoto one of the few basalt shield volcanoes in the world, and a miniature version of the great shield volcanoes of Hawaii. Although Rangitoto is thought to be extinct, the Auckland volcano field is regarded as only dormant – that is 'resting' but potentially active.

The lava rock is an inhospitable environment for plant life, as it is highly porous and heats to very high temperatures. Still, plants and bush are slowly covering the open lava fields. Mosses, lichen and algae

were the first plants to colonise, followed by pohutukawa trees. Rangitoto now has the largest remaining pohutukawa forest in New Zealand. The island is also home to more than 250 species of native trees and flowering plants, including 40 kinds of fern and several species of orchid. The new forest does not support many land birds, but sea birds are common along the shoreline, and the population includes a black-backed gull colony.

PLANNING

When to Tramp

You can tramp year-round on Rangitoto Island, though it can be a hot and dry place during summer, often a degree or two warmer than Auckland. From December through February the temperature is usually around 25°C, and at times can reach 30°C. When the sun and heat reflects off the lava fields, it feels like you're tramping through an oven. Christmas and Easter holidays can be very busy, and with so many people heading for the Rangitoto summit it's like a pilgrimage. Once you are away

from the Summit Track, however, you will encounter far fewer trampers, and possibly none at all on the Coastal Track.

What to Bring

There is no shop or anywhere to purchase food or supplies on the island. Bring your lunch and a couple of water bottles. Also bring sunscreen and a wide-brimmed hat for protection from the intense sun and heat. Many visitors just hiking up to the crater (two hours return) wear running shoes or even sport sandals, but to walk on any other tracks, particularly the Coastal Track, you should wear hiking boots, as the lava rock is loose and tiring on the ankles.

Maps & Brochures

Rangitoto appears on two maps in the 1:50,000 Topomap 260 series, R11 (*Auckland*) and R10 (*Whangaparaoa*). For a day tramp on the island, however, the map in the DOC brochure *Rangitoto Island Scenic Reserve* (\$1) is perfectly sufficient, and it can be purchased at the DOC visitor information

centre (p40) in Auckland – or Fullers Cruise Centre (below) next door – when you purchase your ferry ticket.

Huts & Camping Grounds

There are no huts or other accommodation on Rangitoto Island. On Motutapu Island there is a **DOC camping ground** (\$5) at Home Bay. It has water, toilets and showers.

GETTING TO/FROM THE TRAMP

Rangitoto is reached on a 30-minute ferry ride from Auckland (return \$19), departing from the piers at the intersection of Albert and Quay Sts. Book at **Fullers Cruise Centre** (☎ 09-367 9111; www.fullers.co.nz; Ferry Bldg, 99 Quay St). There are three runs daily, departing at 9.15am, 12.15pm and 3pm. The last boat leaves the island at 3.30pm Sunday through Friday, and 5pm on Saturday.

THE TRAMP

At Rangitoto Wharf there is a large day shelter in which to escape the sun, an outdoor saltwater swimming pool and toilets. There is also drinking water here; fill up your bottles as this is the only source of safe water on the island.

Summit Track is well marked and heads north into bush, but within 10 minutes breaks out into a lava field, a jumbled mass of black rocks. In the middle of it is an **observation deck** with interpretive displays. From here the track continues climbing at a very gentle rate, passing a signposted junction to Wilson's Park Track (left) before reaching the Lava Caves Track (right), 45 minutes from the wharf. Follow this side track for 15 minutes to a series of **caves and tunnels**, formed when the outer surface of the lava cooled after an eruption (when the liquid inner lava drained, the outer shell remained as a cave).

Return to the Summit Track and continue up. The trail steepens for the final 15 minutes to the crater rim, but is never what anybody could consider strenuous. About 2km from the wharf you reach **Crater Lookout**, a large wooden deck. The Rangitoto crater is 60m deep and 200m wide. The inner edge is dotted with tall pohutukawa, while in the crater itself there's a thicket of manuka and kanuka. Head west at the deck to follow the Rim Track, which immediately climbs a long stairway to

the highest point on Rangitoto; the 259m **summit** is marked by a large trig on the edge of the crater. There are great views here, including one of the best available of central Auckland. Also located here is a **cement hut** that served as a fire command post during WWII.

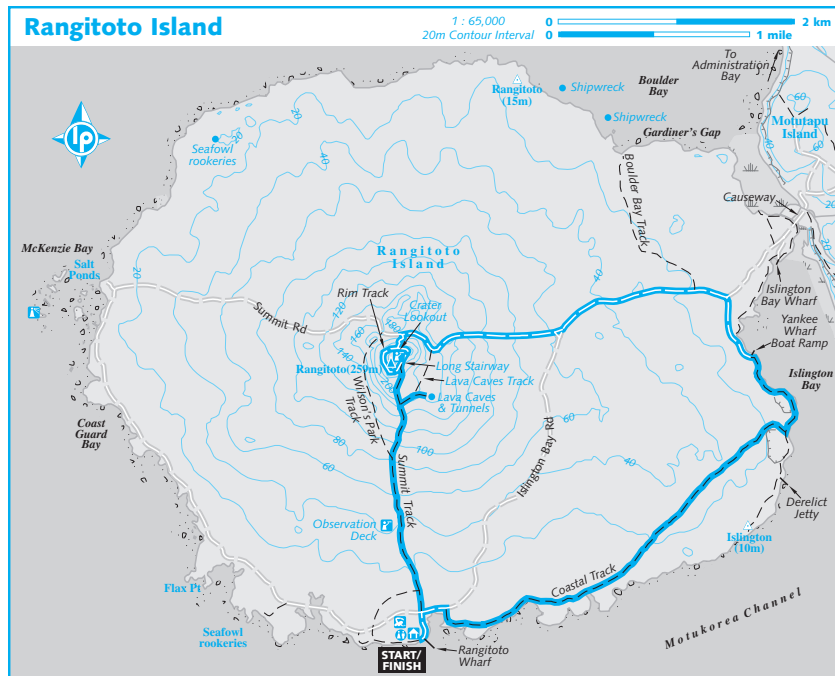
Continue along the Rim Track to return to the Crater Lookout in 10 minutes. You never see the crater from the trail, but a few minutes from the trig you pass a view of the west side of Rangitoto Island, taking in the lighthouse in McKenzie Bay. Just beyond it is another **cement hut** that served as a wireless radar room.

Back at Crater Lookout, follow the long set of stairs that descends to the northeast and ends at Summit Rd, used by Fullers to drive visitors up from McKenzie Bay. Head east on the narrow gravel road as it gently descends through more lava fields. Within 30 to 40 minutes of the stairs on Summit Rd, you'll arrive at the signposted intersection with Islington Bay Rd. Continue heading east towards Islington Bay, and in 30 minutes you'll reach a signposted junction with Boulder Bay Track (left). This track is a 1½-hour return walk to Boulder Bay on the north side of the island. The bay was once used as a wrecking ground for old ships, and in its first cove are four wrecks – though none can be seen from the island.

Another 15 minutes from the Boulder Bay Track junction, or 5km from the wharf, you reach a signposted junction; the road to the left continues to Islington Bay Wharf and the causeway to Motutapu Island. Take the road to the right, marked as the Coastal Track, heading south along the shoreline of Islington Bay. If it's a holiday or weekend the bay will be filled with anchored sailboats and yachts.

The gravel road ends at the Yankee Wharf boat ramp, and from here the Coastal Track continues along the shoreline for another 10 minutes before heading inland. For the next 1½ hours the track stays away from the shoreline and it is a moderately difficult tramp over a path of loose lava rock. This can be hot and tiring, heading through bush with little to look at.

Eventually the track emerges at a large lava field, crossing it to return to the shoreline. The final 30 to 40 minutes to the



Rangitoto Wharf is a well-beaten path along the shoreline, where you can search for sea birds or view Auckland on the horizon. The Coastal Track joins Islington Bay Rd just before you reach the day shelter and swimming pool at Rangitoto Wharf.

WAITAKERE RANGES LOOP

Duration	4 hours
Distance	6.6km
Track Standard	tramping track
Difficulty	moderate–demanding
Start/Finish	Whatipu car park
Nearest Towns	Auckland (p40), Whatipu (p45)
Transport	private
Summary	Walk in a wilderness-like setting not far from Auckland, where lush subtropical vegetation and coastal cliffs give way to stunning views of Manukau Harbour.

Bordering Auckland's wild west coast are the Waitakere Ranges, an area that is rugged, remote and surprisingly close to the heart of New Zealand's largest city. In 30 minutes you can drive from Auckland's Queen St to the Arataki visitor information centre, the gateway to the Waitakere Ranges. In little more than an hour you can reach its most isolated corner at Whatipu.

This explains why Waitakere Ranges Regional Park, part of Auckland Regional Council's recreational park network, is the most popular park in the country. Each year this 160-sq-km park attracts more than two million visitors, outdrawing such better-known places as Milford Sound. Yet much of the Waitakere park, Whatipu in particular, is in a lush, subtropical, wilderness-like setting, crisscrossed by 200km of tracks.

There are two interesting day tramps that begin and end at the Whatipu car park. Gibbons and Muir Tracks (p64) form an 11km loop that traverses a ridge and then returns along the beach, while the tramp described here is along the Kura and Omanawanui Tracks. It begins in the lush Whatipu valley and returns along coastal cliffs, including 241m Omanawanui, which overlooks Manukau Harbour. Although not high, Omanawanui is still a difficult climb, with a very steep descent on its western side.

HISTORY

There were once several Maori settlements along the coastal areas of the Waitakere Ranges, and Whatipu was spiritually significant to the Kawerau, a Maki tribe. Beginning in the mid-1800s, logging became the prime activity in the ranges, with the Whatipu area serving as one of the great timberyards of New Zealand. For more than 50 years (to 1916) acres of sawn timber was stacked along the beach waiting for transport through Manukau Harbour to Onehunga, a southern suburb of Auckland. A 14km tramway was built to assist in moving the timber along the coast from Karekare south to Whatipu, where it was loaded on ships at the Paratutae Island Wharf. Remnants of both the wharf and the tramway can still be seen.

Also remaining from the logging era is Whatipu Lodge. The Gibbons family was responsible for most of the buildings at the lodge site, constructing them in the late 1800s. The family also built and operated a mill behind the lodge in the lush Whatipu valley. Today, the site of the mill is a paddock, which trampers cross on the Kura Track.

By the 1920s the Waitakere Ranges were largely reduced to a series of bare hills and burnt-off farms, land that had been ravaged by clear-felling and the fires that followed. By then the first dam had been built in the ranges' catchments to provide booming Auckland with a safe water supply. By 1970 there were five dams in a catchment area of almost 5000 hectares, supplying 106,000 cu metres of water per day. You can visit the dams, but much of the area and the reservoirs are closed to public use.

With a growing concern about preserving the natural beauty of the area – and to protect Auckland's source of drinking water – Waitakere Ranges Regional Park was established in 1940, in commemoration of the city's centennial celebration.

ENVIRONMENT

Volcanic eruptions under the sea 20 million years ago formed the backbone of the Waitakere Ranges, and are responsible for its rugged terrain and sharp-edged ridges and peaks. The highest point is only 474m – Te Toiokawharu, northwest of Huia on the Twin Peaks Track – but trampers will find climbs are steep.

The ranges guard the western flank of the Auckland isthmus, and the prevailing westerlies have, in turn, created a rainforest from Whatipu as far north as Te Henga (Bethells Beach). Very few stands of virgin timber remain, but regrowth is vigorous along the west coast and the regenerating forest is now a lush setting that often includes nikau palms, supplejack and many fern species.

The bird life is also good in the ranges, with such species as native pigeon (*kereru*), grey warbler, tui and fantail.

The park is famed for its beaches and its rocky outcrops and cliffs overlooking the wild coast. Whatipu's beaches have long been popular among surfcasters and beachcombers. In the 1930s Whatipu Lodge held the world record for a snapper catch (16.8kg) and in 1999 even the locals were stunned at what washed ashore: a 16m-long sperm whale weighing 52 tonnes. Biologists theorised that it died after being hit by a ship.

PLANNING

When to Tramp

Like most other tramps in the far north, this loop can be enjoyed year-round. During heavy rains, however, the tramp up Whatipu valley can be a mudfest, while the stream itself may be so flooded that it's difficult to ford.

What to Bring

Pack sunscreen, a wide-brimmed hat and, if staying at Whatipu, insect repellent to battle both sandflies and mosquitoes.

Maps

The 1:50,000 Topomap 260-Q11 (*Waitakere*) covers the entire Waitakere Ranges Regional Park, but it does not include all the tracks; the Kura Track is not shown. You can also purchase the 1:60,000 *Waitakere Ranges Recreation & Track Guide*, which is more current but does not include contour lines.

Huts

There are no DOC huts or other public huts in Waitakere Ranges Regional Park.

Information Sources

Arataki visitor information centre (☎ 09-817 0077; 300 Scenic Dr), 6km east of Titirangi, is housed in a beautiful building that was designed

to blend into the existing forest. Inside are Maori carvings, interpretive displays, a theatre screening a video on the Waitakere Ranges, and a shop that sells books and maps. Outside is a series of short nature walks.

NEAREST TOWNS

See Auckland (p40).

Whatipu

☎ 09

In the late 1800s, Whatipu was a booming timber centre and the terminus for Piha Tramways. Today, Whatipu is beautiful, wild and as remote a place as any in the greater Auckland area. Just reaching it is an adventure along a narrow and winding gravel road. Bring all your food as there are only limited supplies available at Whatipu – the last large supermarket before Whatipu is **New World** (☎ 817 6859; Titirangi Rd) in Titirangi. The last store and restaurant is the **Huia Store & Cafe** (☎ 811 8809; 1194 Huia Rd; ☎ 7.30am–7.30pm Tue–Sun, to 2pm Mon) in the seaside village of Huia, 10km from Whatipu.

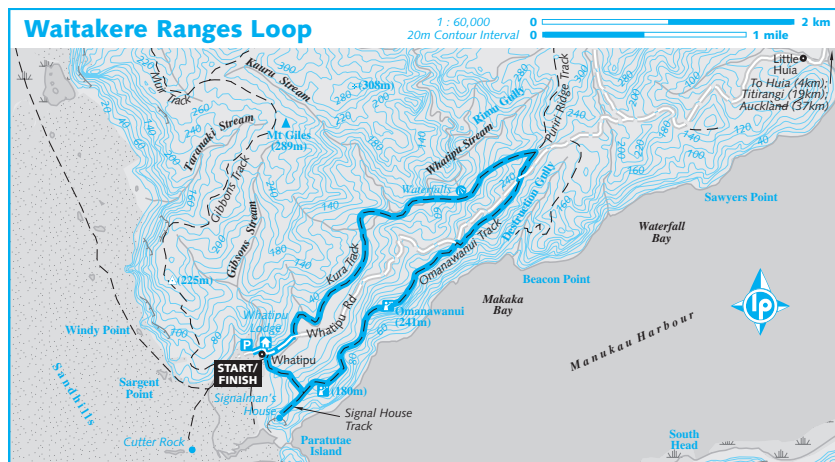
SLEEPING & EATING

At the end of Whatipu Rd, **Whatipu Lodge** (☎ 811 8860; whatipulodge@extra.co.nz; Whatipu Rd; sites per car \$12, cabins per person \$30) offers a camping ground and cottage accommodation. The cottages need to be reserved well in advance. The lodge also has a small shop with limited food supplies and one of the largest billiard tables in the Auckland area.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The most challenging aspect of this tramp for overseas visitors is getting to Whatipu. There is no public transport to the end of the road, so the easiest way to reach the start of the tramp is to rent a car. From central Auckland head southwest to the suburb of Titirangi, reached via Great North Rd and Titirangi Rd. From here it is 25km to Whatipu, via Woodlands Park Rd, Huia Rd and the final 10km along narrow, winding Whatipu Rd.

The other way is to combine a bus ride with hitching. Numerous **Maxx Regional Transport** (☎ 366 6400; www.ride.line.co.nz) buses run from Britomart station to the New Lynn Transport Centre, where you transfer to bus 178. This bus can drop



you off at the corner of Woodlands Park and Huia Rds, about 20km from the start of the tramp.

THE TRAMP

Kura Track is signposted northeast along Whatipu Rd from Whatipu car park. Climb over the paddock fence and follow the white posts through pasture for 10 to 15 minutes. When the track moves into the bush it can be muddy, but it remains level and soon you are skirting **Whatipu Stream** through a jungle-like setting of nikau palms and ferns.

Within 30 minutes (1.5km) of leaving Whatipu Rd, you come to the first ford across Whatipu Stream. There are four fords, which under normal conditions are easy crossings. They are clearly marked with orange triangles, but the second one can be a bit confusing. If the track ends, simply cross the stream and look for it on the other side.

After the fourth ford the track begins a steep climb out of the valley. When it eases up a bit you pass two **waterfalls**; the track passes so close to the second one that its mist will fall on you like light rain. The track resumes its steep climb and, five minutes before reaching Whatipu Rd, intersects with the Puriri Ridge Track. You can follow this track northeast (left) to Mt Donald McLean, a 389m high point 50 minutes away. Continuing southwest (right) the track soon breaks out at Whatipu Rd. It

takes most people less than two hours to reach Whatipu Rd along Kura Track.

The Omanawanui Track begins directly across Whatipu Rd. The first 10 to 15 minutes is a steady descent with no views. If it is especially muddy, you can skip this segment by simply following Whatipu Rd southwest. In less than 1km you'll reach a second trailhead for the Omanawanui Track. From here the track begins to climb and within 10 minutes you reach the first **viewpoint** of the day. Through a gap in the trees you can see the entrance of Manukau Harbour and Omanawanui, an impressive, bush-clad peak that rises 241m straight from the sea. Don't panic, but that's where you're headed.

The track descends briefly and then commences the long climb to the summit of Omanawanui. It's steep at times and can be slippery if there has been recent rain. Halfway to the top the track skirts the edge of the cliffs and you're rewarded with more views, each better than the last. From the first trailhead on Whatipu Rd it takes an hour to reach the top of **Omanawanui**, where there is a black-and-white trig. The views are excellent; to the south you'll see the towering cliffs of the South Head of the Awhitu Peninsula, while to the north and east is the rugged interior of the Waitakere Ranges.

Make a straight descent off Omanawanui along its western flank, which is much steeper than its eastern side. Be careful

along this stretch and, if it's muddy, take it slow. Eventually you bottom out, only to immediately climb a small rocky knob and then begin the final climb of the day. This ascent is to a 180m high point. The climb is much easier than Omanawanui, but at times the track skirts the steep edge of the coastal cliffs and you need to watch your footing.

About an hour from Omanawanui, you reach the **peak**, where the views are stunning. To the south you can see waves pounding the west coast of Awhitu Peninsula, to the north you can see the wide beach leading all the way to Karekare, and directly below you is Paratutae Island on one side and Whatipu Lodge on the other.

In the final stretch Omanawanui Track makes a quick descent to Whatipu. Within five minutes you pass a signposted junction for the Signal House Track; it is a 20-minute return walk along the ridge to the site of **Signalman's House** above Paratutae Island and a great view of the mouth of Manukau Harbour. Return to Omanawanui Track and continue descending northwest. In 10 minutes cross Whatipu Stream and walk down the road to the car park near the lodge.

CAPE REINGA WALKWAY

Duration	3 days
Distance	41km
Track Standard	tramping track
Difficulty	easy
Start	Te Paki Stream (Ninety Mile Beach)
Finish	Kapowairau (p49)
Nearest Town	Kaitiaki (p48)
Transport	bus
Summary	A scenic tramp along the sweeping Cape Reinga coastline and the semi-tropical sands of seven beaches.

The top of New Zealand is a place pounded by the seas, whipped by winds and bathed by enough sun-drenched days to rival Abel Tasman National Park. The area is wild and powerful. It is here that the strong and unforgiving currents of the Tasman Sea and Pacific Ocean sweep along the shorelines, before meeting in a fury of foam just west of Cape Reinga.

Providing trampers a front-row seat to nature's beauty and drama here is the Cape Reinga Walkway, a meander between seven beaches, beginning with the country's longest. Once described as a 'desert coast', Ninety Mile Beach is almost concrete-hard below the high-tide line – which makes for easy tramping – and is bordered much of the way by sand dunes up to 6km wide and rising in places to 143m in height. The tramp then skirts the actual cape, becoming a mix of climbs to cliff tops with spectacular views and descents to beaches with superb sand.

The walkway lies entirely in the Te Paki Recreation Reserve and is managed by DOC, which unfortunately does not maintain any huts along the track. The tramp can be extended by starting in Ahipara, 83km south of Te Paki Stream at the southern end of Ninety Mile Beach, adding three or four days to the journey. You can also join it at Waipapakauri (69km south of Te Paki Stream), Hukateri (51km) or the Bluff (19km); the 32km portion from Hukateri to the Bluff (a famous spot for surf fishing) is ruler-straight. Keep in mind, however, that you'll encounter cars and tour buses daily on Ninety Mile Beach until you pass Te Paki Stream.

HISTORY

Maori were already well established in New Zealand's far north by the time Europeans arrived, and Cape Reinga had long been regarded in Maori legend as the departure point of spirits.

In 1642, Dutch explorer Abel Tasman sailed past and named Cape Maria van Diemen, a point southwest of Cape Reinga. Captain James Cook also sailed by during his first visit to New Zealand in 1769, but arrived during a storm. He sat tight and refused to leave until he had recorded, with remarkable accuracy, the position of the cape. In 1941 a lighthouse was built at Cape Reinga. It was one of the first in the country to be automated by electric power provided by a diesel generator, and it throws a warning signal 49km out to sea.

ENVIRONMENT

There are impressive stands of native bush, such as giant kauri and pohutukawa trees, around Sandy Bay and Tapotupotu Bay. The

wildlife most trampers will encounter are coastal birds such as oystercatchers, New Zealand dotterels, pied stilts, terns, gulls and the occasional white-faced heron. The area is best known for its extraordinarily large numbers of native land snails, including many colonies of the threatened flax snail.

PLANNING

You can check tide times, which are important for river crossings on this tramp, at the website of **Land Information New Zealand** (www.hydro.linz.govt.nz/tides/index.asp).

When to Tramp

This is an excellent tramp for any time of the year. However, during summer the region has long spells of dry weather, with temperatures hot enough to be considered almost tropical, and a very intense sun.

What to Bring

This tramp requires a tent with insect netting. Take sunscreen, a wide-brimmed hat, long-sleeved shirt and trousers of light material (not wool). You should also have at least a 1L water bottle per person, if not two. Treat all water by either filtering or boiling it. Because of the extreme fire risk in summer, fires are prohibited; pack a stove.

Maps

The described route is covered by the 1:50,000 Topomap 260-M02/N02 (*North Cape*). If you're tramping north from Ahipara along Ninety Mile Beach, 260-N03 (*Houhora*) and 260-N04 (*Ahipara*) complete the coverage.

Huts & Camping Grounds

There are no huts on this tramp, so make sure you bring a tent. Good backcountry camp sites are located at Twilight Beach and Scott Point. Backcountry camping is free.

There are also two **DOC camping grounds** (per person \$7) on the cape, at Kapowairau (Spirits Bay) and Tapotupotu Bay. They have fresh water, cold showers and toilets, but no electricity.

NEAREST TOWN & FACILITIES

Kaitaia

☎ 09 / pop 5630

Kaitaia is about 80km from the start of the tramp and serves as the main departure

point for most trips and tours to Ninety Mile Beach and Cape Reinga.

INFORMATION

DOC Kaitaia Field Centre (☎ 408 6014; 24 Matthews Ave) Information on tramping the Cape Reinga Walkway.

Far North visitor information centre (☎ 408 0879; kaitaiainfo@xtra.co.nz; Jaycee Park, South Rd) Travel information and DOC brochures on the region. Also books accommodation, tours and transport to Cape Reinga, and serves as the major bus stop in town.

SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT

If you don't have a tent or sleeping mat, you can rent them through **Cape Reinga Adventures** (☎ 409 8445; www.capereingaadventures.co.nz) or purchasing inexpensive gear at the **Warehouse** (☎ 408 6096; 11 Matthews Ave).

For maps, stove fuel and freeze-dried meals, stop at **Riders Sports Depot** (☎ 408 0240; 73 Commerce St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat). Pick up all your food and scroggin for the trail at the gigantic **Pak'nSave** (☎ 408 6222; Commerce St).

SLEEPING & EATING

Kaitaia Motor Camp (☎ 408 1212; 67 South Rd; sites for 2 \$20) is at the southern end of town, with a laundry and communal kitchen, next to a dairy and takeaway.

Main Street Lodge (☎ 408 1275; www.tall-tale.co.nz/mainstreet; 237A Commerce St; camp sites for 2 \$15, dm \$25-27, s/d \$50/56; ☎) is the large backpacker lodge in Kaitaia, with two kitchens and TV rooms, luggage storage and helpful staff with all the information on tours and activities in the region.

Kaitaia Lodge Motel (☎ 408 1190; 15 South Rd; s & d \$80; ☎) is a tidy little motel across from the visitor information centre with eight rooms, each with a fully-equipped kitchen.

Most of Kaitaia's cafés and restaurants are on or very near Commerce St. **Mussel Rock Bar** (☎ 408 0094; 75 Commerce St; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Thu, to midnight Fri & Sat) is a pleasant café during the day and a quiet bar at night, serving a variety of seafood and toasted sandwiches.

The **Bushman's Hut** (☎ 408 4320; 7 Bank St; ☎ 5-9pm Tue-Sun) has rustic décor inside, tables outside, and the best steaks anywhere in town. Its carpetbag is a thick sirloin stuffed with oysters.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Northliner Express (☎ 307 5873; www.northliner.co.nz) buses run daily between Auckland and Kaitaia (\$71, 6½ hours). You can book a seat at the **Far North visitor information centre** (☎ 408 0879; kaitaiainfo@xtra.co.nz; Jaycee Park, South Rd), from where the buses depart.

Kapowairau

In Kapowairau, at the tramp's end, you'll find a **DOC camping ground** (per person \$7) near a small lagoon, with cold showers and toilets but no shelter or source of drinking water. If spending the night here, make sure your tent has bug-proof netting. You'll encounter lots of sandflies during the day and then mosquitoes at night. Spirits Bay Rd leads south from the camping ground towards Waitiki Landing.

GETTING TO/FROM THE TRAMP

There is no regular bus transport beyond Kaitaia, but a number of companies run tours to Cape Reinga and will drop off and pick up trampers. Most tours swing onto Ninety Mile Beach heading north, leaving it at Te Pahi Stream for Cape Reinga. Once at the cape they turn around and head south through the middle of the long peninsula, stopping for lunch at Tapotupotu Bay. Most companies will drop you off at Te Pahi Stream and then pick you up two to four days later at Tapotupotu Bay.

Kaitaia-based tour operators include **Harrisons Cape Runner** (☎ 0800-227 373, 09-408 1033; www.ahipara.co.nz/caperunner), which has minibuses that depart at 9am daily and return by 5pm. For the price of a \$40 tour you're dropped off and picked up any day you wish, as long as there is an empty seat on the bus – outside the high season of mid-December to mid-January that's usually not a problem. If you want to guarantee a seat on the return trip it's another \$40.

Cape Reinga Adventures (☎ 09-409 8445; www.capereingaadventures.co.nz) charges \$55 each way. It will also provide drop-off and pick-up service in your vehicle, and keep it secure while you're walking (\$60 per person).

It's also possible to be picked up at Kapowairau. Located 16km away along Spirits Bay and Te Hapua Rds is **Waitiki Landing** (☎ 09-409 7508; waitiki.landing@xtra.co.nz; SH1; camp site for 2 \$20, dm \$20), a complex that includes a tearoom, dairy, camping ground and backpacker

lodge. From Waitiki Landing it will arrange for a drop off at Te Pahi Stream and a pick up at Kapowairau for \$35 per person.

THE TRAMP

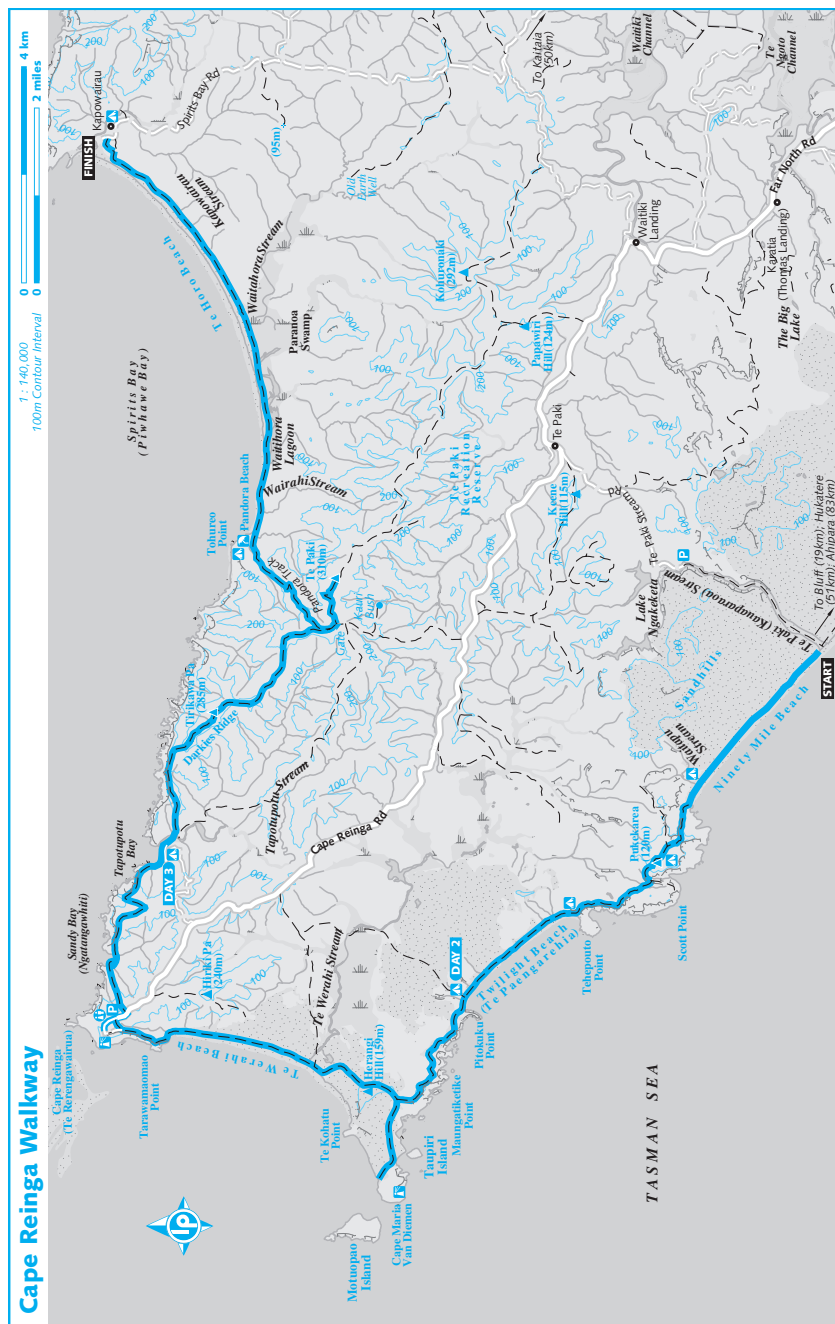
Day 1: Te Pahi Stream to Twilight Beach

3½–4 hours, 10.5km

Te Pahi (Kauaparaoa) Stream marks the southern border of the recreation reserve of the same name, but is more famous for being a 'quicksand stream'. If you have to walk in from the car park at the end of Te Pahi Stream Rd, as opposed to a tour bus dropping you off at the mouth of the stream, it's an additional 45 minutes to one hour of wet trekking through the stream. From the end of the stream head north-west along the wide, flat expanse of **Ninety Mile Beach**, flanked by sand dunes on the east and the pounding surf of the Tasman Sea to the west. After an hour of beach walking you pass a camp site and come to Waitapu Stream, which may or may not be dry. The track then leaves the beach and begins a steep climb – via steps thankfully – to the southern side of Scott Point. You cross a small gully then resume climbing steeply before topping out to good views of Ninety Mile Beach below.

On **Scott Point** the track moves into scrub and then joins a 4WD track to arrive at a good area for backcountry camping. There are no facilities, but the grassy site sits high above the pounding surf, and you can see over to Cape Maria van Diemen during the day, and the glow of its lighthouse is visible at night.

The marked track continues to follow the old vehicle track across Scott Point. It is well marked with orange posts because there is a maze of tracks on the point. It takes 1½ hours to cross the point and descend onto **Twilight Beach** (Te Paengarehia), which is named after a schooner that sank here in 1871. There's a backcountry camp site near the southern end of the beach. Here you will find yourself tramping along a sandy shoreline devoid of tourists. Plan on 45 minutes to reach the northern end of the beach – that's if the sun and sand don't tempt and delay you – where there's a small stream and a signposted route to the Te Werahi gate along Cape Reinga Rd, a 1½-hour walk away.



Cape Reinga Walkway

Near here is yet another backcountry camp site. Note, however, that you should filter or boil any drinking water gathered from nearby streams.

Day 2: Twilight Beach to Tapotupotu Bay

6 hours, 13km

From a junction at the northern end of Twilight Beach, head left along an old 4WD track that skirts a swamp and then climbs a ridge that separates the wetland from the sea. Walk northwest along the ridge through flax and manuka scrublands, while enjoying great views of Cape Maria van Diemen and even a peek of the Cape Reinga Lighthouse to the north. The track leaves the grassy ridge and heads into sand dunes, and one hour from Twilight Beach reaches a signposted junction. Turn west (left) to continue onto **Cape Maria van Diemen**. This side trail follows the coast for 40 minutes, providing excellent views most of the way to the lighthouse that was built after the one on nearby Motuopao Island closed in 1941.

There are two ways to reach Te Werahi Beach from the end of Cape Maria van Diemen. Most trampers backtrack and head north (left) at the junction. This high-level track, marked by orange posts, climbs around **Herangi Hill** (159m) and then descends to Te Werahi Stream. It takes 45 minutes to one hour to walk to the southern end of Te Werahi Beach via Herangi Hill. For the more adventurous, at low tide you can follow the rocky shoreline to Te Werahi Stream. If you have any concerns about the tide or your timing, take the high-level track.

Te Werahi Stream should be crossed near low tide. From the stream it takes 45 minutes to one hour to tramp along the long, sweeping **Te Werahi Beach** to Tarawamaomao Point at the northern end. At high tide you'll get your boots wet, as the cliffs close in at the northern end before the track climbs sharply away from the beach. You continue along steep cliff tops where on clear days you're rewarded with spectacular views of sandy beaches, Cape Maria van Diemen and Motuopao Island.

Within an hour of the ascent from Te Werahi Beach, the walkway emerges at the car park right at the northern end of SH1.

Cape Reinga and its lighthouse is a 10-minute stroll away. The cape is a scenic spot and often appears on travel brochures. It's also a good place to witness the often-violent meeting of the Pacific Ocean and Tasman Sea. Keep an eye out for the many pods of dolphins that round the cape in feeding forays. There are flush toilets at the cape, but no longer a shop or a source of safe drinking water.

In the Maori language, Reinga means 'place of leaping'. According to Maori legend, spirits travelled to the pohutukawa tree on the headland of Cape Reinga and descended to the underworld by sliding down a root into the sea. They emerged on Ohaua – the highest point of the Three Kings Islands – to bid farewell before returning to the Polynesian homeland of their ancestors.

The walkway resumes in the car park and heads east. You sidle the hill, then descend a long, grassy ridge to **Sandy Bay** (Ngatangawhiti), a pleasant sandy beach (thus its name) with a freshwater stream and grassy flats beneath pohutukawa trees. It is reached 30 minutes from the lighthouse. On the other side of the small bay the track begins a steep climb to a coastal ridge, turns inland for a spell, then returns to the cliff tops and good views, from where it descends sharply towards **Tapotupotu Bay**, 2½ hours from Cape Reinga.

Tapotupotu is one of the most scenic beaches in the far north. It's a horseshoe-shaped bay of white sand and light-green seas enclosed by forested cliffs. There's a freshwater stream here and, thanks to the gravel road that enables access from Cape Reinga Rd, a DOC camping ground with a shelter, cold showers, toilets and drinking water.

Day 3: Tapotupotu Bay to Kapowairau

7–8 hours, 17.5km

This is an interesting day, but one many trampers pass up because of the difficulty of arranging transport out of Kapowairau. The first part of the day is along old ridge-top farm tracks, the second is through the sand of two stunning beaches – Pandora and Te Horo.

At Tapotupotu Bay, begin by crossing the estuary past the kitchen block in the camping ground and follow the 4WD track along the stream for 15 minutes. This is best done

TE ARAROA – THE LONG PATHWAY

In a nation of trampers, the idea of a track the length of New Zealand – from Cape Reinga on the northern point of the North Island, to Bluff on the southern tip of the South Island – has always been an appealing one. The idea was first proposed in 1967, by the Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC), and was on the agenda in 1976 when the New Zealand Walkways Commission (NZWC) was established.

After putting in more than 100 small trails, the NZWC was dissolved in 1989, without having progressed the long-trail concept. That goal was revived in 1994 when Geoff Chapple wrote a piece for the *Sunday Star-Times* urging the construction of Te Araroa – the Long Pathway.

We see Te Araroa as a leisurely exploration of New Zealand's character – the bush but also the farmed and cultivated countryside, the coast but also the interior mountains and rivers, a link between small towns and their people, but also cities. Finally we think it should follow the contours of our history.

Support poured in from around the country and the **Te Araroa Trust** (www.teararoa.org.nz) was formed with Sir Edmund Hillary as a patron. The trust opened its first trail – a 22km section between Waitangi and Kerikeri – in 1995, and by 1997 it had mapped out the North Island route, an 1175km tramp, 90% of it off the roads.

Chapple quit his job as deputy editor of the *New Zealand Listener* to become CEO of the Te Araroa Trust, and in 1998 spent three months tramping the proposed North Island trail. In 2002 Chapple walked the proposed South Island trail, route-testing and completing a personal goal of walking the length of New Zealand. Now the motto of the trust is, 'a hiking trail the length of New Zealand by 2008'. Now most people believe the 2930km trail will be built after all.

Why is Te Araroa succeeding when other attempts have failed? Chapple says the main reason is because it's not a government trail. After spending time in the USA studying the Appalachian Trail – a 3474km route linking Maine to Georgia, maintained by a private, volunteer-based, non-profit organisation – Chapple returned convinced that a national trail in New Zealand needed to involve the communities through which it passed. He argued this in the *FMC Bulletin*.

The key to the success of the Appalachian Trail is ownership by hiking clubs of specific trail sections. If a New Zealand-long trail is to emerge we will need a similar commitment...the schools, Conservation Corps and service groups will all need to pitch in.

In this nation of trampers, Geoff Chapple thinks they will.

at low tide as the water will be waist-deep at high tide. A marker indicates where the track branches off to the left and makes a 200m climb to the top of the coastal ridge. For the next 40 minutes to one hour there are spectacular views of Tapotupotu Bay and all the way back to Cape Reinga, before the track descends (annoyingly) inland. You then climb over **Tirikawa Pa** (285m) and traverse **Darkies Ridge** to reach the Pandora Track, an old metalled road, at a signposted junction within two hours of the camping ground.

Just south along the Pandora Track, 15 minutes from the junction, is a side track to **Te Paki** (310m), the highest point in the area. Plan an hour for the return trip to the summit, where you can see the remains of a wartime radar station and a spectacular panorama of the coastline.

Pandora Track heads northeast and leads down to Pandora, reached one hour from the junction or four to five hours (9km) from Tapotupotu Bay. **Pandora** is a beautifully secluded beach with an open grassy area that trampers can use as a camp site. It's surrounded by fruit trees and the remains of an old tourist camp from the 1920s, and is a great place to drop the pack, remove the boots and jump into the sea. If you hit the beach near low tide you can reach Spirits Bay by the seaward route, around the rocky shoreline. Otherwise, follow the orange posts that mark the high-tide route, as it climbs a pair of headlands divided by Wairahi Stream.

Once on the bay you can follow **Te Horo Beach** to Kapowairau at the eastern end of the beach, a three-hour (8.5km) trek from

Pandora. After the rock-hard surface of Ninety Mile Beach, many trampers find the soft sand of Te Horo to be knee-bending work. The alternative is to tramp behind the sand dunes along an old vehicle track marked by orange poles. The walking is easier and the wetlands you skirt are an interesting change from the pounding sea.

For either route you must first cross Waitahora Lagoon, which is where Waitahora Stream flows into the ocean. This should only be crossed at – or near – low tide.

GREAT BARRIER FOREST

Duration	3 days
Distance	29km
Track Standard	tramping & easy tramping track
Difficulty	moderate
Start	Windy Canyon Lookout
Finish	Whangaparapara Rd
Nearest Town	Tryphena (p55)
Transport	bus
Summary	Explore the rugged interior of Great Barrier Island, via a climb to the island's highest peak, a soak in a hot spring and a sight of one of the best-preserved kauri dams in the country.

Great Barrier Island (Aotea), 88km north-east of Auckland, has many long sandy beaches on its eastern side, and deep sheltered inlets on its west. In the middle is a rugged area of steep ridges, rising to a high point of 621m at Hirakimata (Mt Hobson).

Of the island's 285 sq km, 220 sq km is conservation land, with the central mass – known as the Great Barrier Forest – under DOC management. A network of tracks through wild bush combines with old logging roads and tramways (the rails have long since rotted) to provide numerous tramping opportunities. Natural hot springs, towering kauri trees and the relics of kauri dams are the most interesting features of the area; the island's relaxing, get-away-from-it-all aura is a bonus.

This tramp takes in all the highlights. You begin with some of the most dramatic scenery on the island – Windy Canyon – and you end by soaking those tired legs in Kai-toke Hot Springs. In between you'll see

some of New Zealand's most magnificent forests – from giant kauri trees to groves of nikau palms – thanks to the complete absence of possums.

HISTORY

Hauraki Gulf was one of the first places in New Zealand settled by Polynesians. Captain Cook sighted and named Great Barrier Island (it seemed to bar the entrance to Hauraki Gulf) in 1769. As happened elsewhere in the far north, it was Great Barrier Island's rich resources that led Europeans to settle there. The first European settlement was a village established by Cornish miners in 1842 at Miners Cove in the island's northwest corner, and whalers often worked the waters offshore in the 1800s.

But it was the kauri tree and its natural by-product, gum, that was the most sought-after and longest-lasting resource. By the 1930s logging had devastated the land. Timber drives, using kauri dams (see the boxed text on p60) and large amounts of water to flush the logs out to sea, had been especially destructive, and quickly eroded valleys and stream beds, leaving a broad silt flat at river mouths. In 1946 the New Zealand Forest Service began rehabilitating the forest and, in 1973, it was declared a forest recreation reserve. When DOC was established in 1987 it took over administration of the area.

ENVIRONMENT

Great Barrier Island is predominantly volcanic rock, the eroded remnants of a line of andesitic and rhyolitic volcanoes that erupted more than three million years ago. The result is a rugged landscape, and one of the last wilderness areas in the Auckland region. The heart of the island is a regenerating 8000-hectare kauri forest, crowned by Hirakimata/Mt Hobson. On the west coast, steep forested ridges extend to the sea, where they merge into a flooded coastal landscape and a maze of bays and harbours, making Great Barrier a popular destination for kayakers. The east coast is more gentle, featuring sweeping white beaches and alluvial flats.

The island is a haven for a long list of rare and endangered birds. More than 60% of New Zealand's entire brown teal

population lives on Great Barrier, and they can often be seen in the wetlands of Whangapoua. The island also serves as a stronghold for the North Island kaka and banded rail. There are also some spotless crakes and fernbirds.

Lower to the ground you might spot a lizard; Great Barrier Island has one of the most diverse populations of lizards in the country. The 13 species recorded include the large and rare chevron skink, which is found only on Great Barrier and Little Barrier Islands.

PLANNING When to Tramp

Tramping takes place year-round, although the wet winters can quickly turn the tracks to mud. The peak season is mid-December to mid-January. However, because of the cost of getting to Great Barrier Island, the tracks and huts, although busy, are not overrun. Visitors begin thinning out after January, and many believe the best time to explore the island is March to May, when temperatures are still warm but the rainy season has yet to set in.

What to Bring

There is no reticulated water on the island, but freshwater is available from various sites. While most water is considered safe to drink, the parasite giardia is present. All water should be boiled or treated before drinking. Fires are not permitted at any camp sites, so bring a stove if you plan to camp.

There's also no main power on the island and no streetlights, so bring a torch (flashlight). Food is available, but it is more expensive than on the mainland, so it's best to bring all supplies from Auckland.

Maps & Brochures

The 1:50,000 Topomap 260-SO8/T08 (*Barrier*) covers most tracks, but the 1:50,000 Holidaymaker No 239 (*Great Barrier Island*) is just as good. The *Great Barrier Island Tracks and Walks* pamphlet, available from DOC, is useful and provides updated information.

Huts & Camping Grounds

Unfortunately there is only one DOC hut on Great Barrier Island, as Whangaparapara

Hut burned down in 2000. There are no plans to rebuild at this site, but DOC has plans to build two more huts elsewhere in an effort to developed more circuits for trampers.

Until then the sole hut is **Kaiaraara Hut** (\$10), which is found in a bush setting and is reached at the end of Day 1 of this tramp. The Serviced hut sleeps up to 30 people in two bunkrooms, with facilities that include cold water, vault toilets and a kitchen with a wood stove. The hut is very busy from November to January.

If you are planning to **camp** (per person \$9), you should book your sites before going to the island, particularly in December and January; sites are confirmed when you pay. The hut and camping grounds can be booked through the **DOC Great Barrier Area Office** (☎ 09-429 0044; Port Fitzroy).

It is, however, entirely possible to complete this tramp without having to carry a tent at all, as the **Great Barrier Lodge** (☎ 09-429 0488; www.greatbarrierlodge.co.nz; dm/cabins \$40/80, d \$145-175), in Whangaparapara Harbour, maintains a dorm room, guest rooms and cottages. The lodge, which boasts an impressive view of the wharf in the harbour, also has a restaurant, a bar and even a small store.

Information Sources

DOC Great Barrier Area Office (☎ 09-429 0044; Port Fitzroy) A 20-minute walk south of the ferry landing, with information and maps on the island, collects camping fees, sells hut tickets and operates a good camping ground.

Great Barrier Island visitor information centre (☎ 09-429 0033; Claris Postal Centre) The island's main information centre, opposite the airstrip in Claris.

Permits & Regulations

There are very strict regulations on animals being taken to the island; to protect native species, pets are not permitted at all in conservation areas.

Camping is not allowed outside of designated camping grounds, and the number of campers in each site is also restricted. For these reasons it is essential that you book your camp sites before setting out for Great Barrier Island. If the camping grounds are full up (which is possible during peak holiday periods) you may have no alternative but to return to the mainland.

DAY TRAMPS ON GREAT BARRIER ISLAND

Great Barrier Island is such a laid-back, never-in-a-hurry place that the slogan for **Great Barrier Buses** (☎ 0800-426 832, 09-429 0474; www.greatbarriertravel.co.nz) is 'We Go Everywhere Eventually'. This is bad if you're late for the ferry, but good if you're a trampler. The company's passes for unlimited travel (one day \$39, weekend \$49, five days \$59) and its go-everywhere attitude allow trampers to be dropped off at one trailhead and picked up at another. You tramp all day but at night are back at your camp site or lodge enjoying a hot meal or a cold beer.

Following are three of the most popular day tramps for which the easy-going company provides transport.

High Peaks & Hot Springs

This walk begins with a drop-off at Palmers Track, which leads through Windy Canyon to the top of Hiraikimata/Mt Hobson. You then head south on South Fork Track, Peach Tree Track and Tramline Track to the Kaitoke Hot Springs for a well-deserved soak. You finish the day with a 40-minute walk along the Kaitoke Hot Springs Track to be picked up at Whangaparapara Rd. Total walking time – not including a lunch break or that soak in the hot springs – is six to seven hours.

Rugged Coasts

The Harataonga Coastal Walkway follows an old coastal road – an easy walk past stunning views of the rugged shoreline. You are dropped off at Aotea Rd near the Okiwi airstrip, and then hike to the Harataonga camping ground, a five-hour walk. You then have to follow Harataonga Rd as it makes a steady climb to Aotea Rd, where you are picked up. Total walking time is six to seven hours.

Canyons, Gorges & Dams

This is the first day of the Great Barrier Forest tramp, but you are dropped off at Windy Canyon and picked up at Port Fitzroy. In between is a five- to six-hour walk through canyons and gorges, passing the island's most impressive kauri dam along the way.

NEAREST TOWN Tryphena

☎ 09

Tryphena is the island's main settlement and the arrival point for ferries. It's a collection of cottages, a handful of accommodation places, two stores and some beautiful beaches spread out along Tryphena Harbour.

SUPPLIES

Stonewall Store (☎ 429 0451; Pa Beach), 6km from the ferry wharf, is a well-stocked grocery shop that serves as the heart of Tryphena. Along with the store, the small complex includes a bakery, gift shop and post office.

Mulberry Grove Store (☎ 429 0909; Sunset Waterfront Lodge, Mulberry Grove) includes a bottle shop, a quaint bar, laundry and public showers.

SLEEPING & EATING

Great Barrier Island Camp Ground (☎ 429 0184; Puriri Bay; site per adult/child \$8.50/4.50) has toilets, showers and barbecues.

Stray Possum Lodge (☎ 0800-767 786, 429 0109; www.straypossum.co.nz; Cape Barrier Rd; sites for 2 \$24,

dm/d/tr \$20/60/75; ☒) is a short walk from the ferry, just south of Mulberry Grove, in a lovely bush setting. The lodge is trampler-friendly and has its own bar and restaurant, where you can sit on the veranda and enjoy a brew while watching the sun set over the rugged landscape and a slice of Tryphena Harbour. Highly recommended.

Pohutukawa Lodge (☎ 429 0211; www.currachirishpub.com; Blackwell Dr, Pa Beach; dm \$25, d \$130-150) offers hostel-style accommodation and five recently updated rooms next to Stonewall Store.

Sunset Waterfront Lodge (☎ 429 0051; www.sunsetlodge.co.nz; Mulberry Grove; d/villas \$168/208; ☒) is more upscale, with studios and A-frame villas across the road from a beautiful beach.

Currah Irish Pub (☎ 429 0211; Pohutukawa Lodge, Pa Beach; ☎ 4pm-late) is a lively spot with good seafood, steaks, a weekly curry night and often live music. Like any good Irish pub, it has Guinness on tap.

Tipi & Bob's (☎ 429 0550; Pa Beach; ☎ 8.30am-9pm) is good for a meal or just a drink on a deck overlooking the Tryphena waterfront.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Most ferries to Great Barrier Island stop at Tryphena, and no longer continue to Port Fitzroy as they did in the past.

Sealink (☎ 0800-732 546, 300 5900; www.sealink.co.nz) is the main ferry provider, with sailings on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday (adult/child return \$95/65, five hours). **Fullers** (☎ 367 9111; www.fullers.co.nz) operates the fastest boats between Auckland and Great Barrier Island (adult/child return \$99/46, two hours), with runs on most Fridays and Sundays from late December to early February, and extra trips during the Christmas school holidays.

Great Barrier Airlines (☎ 0800-900 600, 275 9120; www.gbair.co.nz) and **Mountain Air** (☎ 0800-222 123,

256 7025; www.mountainair.co.nz) fly several times daily from Auckland to Claris (adult/child \$95/55, 30 to 40 minutes). Both airlines also fly to Great Barrier Island from Whangarei (\$100, 40 minutes).

The ferry terminal is 6km south of Tryphena, and the Claris airfield is 16km north. **Great Barrier Buses** (☎ 0800-426 832, 429 0474; www.greatbarriertravel.co.nz) provides transport to Tryphena or around the island.

GETTING TO/FROM THE TRAMP

The walk begins at the Windy Canyon Lookout on Aotea Rd, 28km north of Tryphena, and ends at the Kaitoke Hot Springs Track on Whangaparapara Rd, 4km west of Claris. **Great Barrier Buses** (☎ 0800-426

832, 09-429 0474; www.greatbarriertravel.co.nz) can deliver you from Tryphena to Windy Canyon Lookout (\$23) and pick you up from Whangaparapara Rd (\$17). You can also purchase a five-day unlimited-travel pass (\$59).

THE TRAMP
Day 1: Windy Canyon Lookout to Kaiaraara Hut

4–6 hours, 10km, 307m ascent, 620 descent

Starting on Palmers Track, signposted just north of the Windy Canyon Lookout car park, you begin climbing immediately. In recent years this immensely popular area has received considerable work, and now the first 15 minutes is dominated by steps and ladders. You quickly catch a glimpse of **Windy Canyon** and soon you're on a high point looking down at sheer rock walls rising straight out of a lush forest. There is a tendency to rush ahead here – the eagerness at the start of any new walk – but don't. The scenery and views at the beginning are among the best on the island.

You pass great views of Whangapoua Estuary to the north and Awana Bay to the south, and within 30 minutes come to a **wooden horse**, part of a pulley system that loggers used to haul logs up the steep slopes. The track then follows the central ridge and within an hour from the start you top out on a scrubby knob (400m) with views all around. The one that commands your attention, however, is Hiramakimata/Mt Hobson straight ahead.

The climb to the peak is steady and, in some places, steep; you'll be using tree roots like a ladder. You are in the bush all the way and when you arrive at an impressive set of stairs and boardwalks you're less than 10 minutes from the summit. The entire summit has been planked because it serves as the principal nesting area for the rare black petrel. The steps lead to the signposted junction of the South Fork Track, the Kaiaraara Track, and the stairway that climbs to the top of **Hiramakimata/Mt Hobson**. Reached two hours (4km) from the road, the 621m peak has a wooden platform with a large trig and views of both sides of Great Barrier Island, as well as the outer islands in the Hauraki Gulf. If it's lunchtime, or even if it's not, this is the place to enjoy it.

At the junction pick up the Kaiaraara Track (right). The steps continue for almost

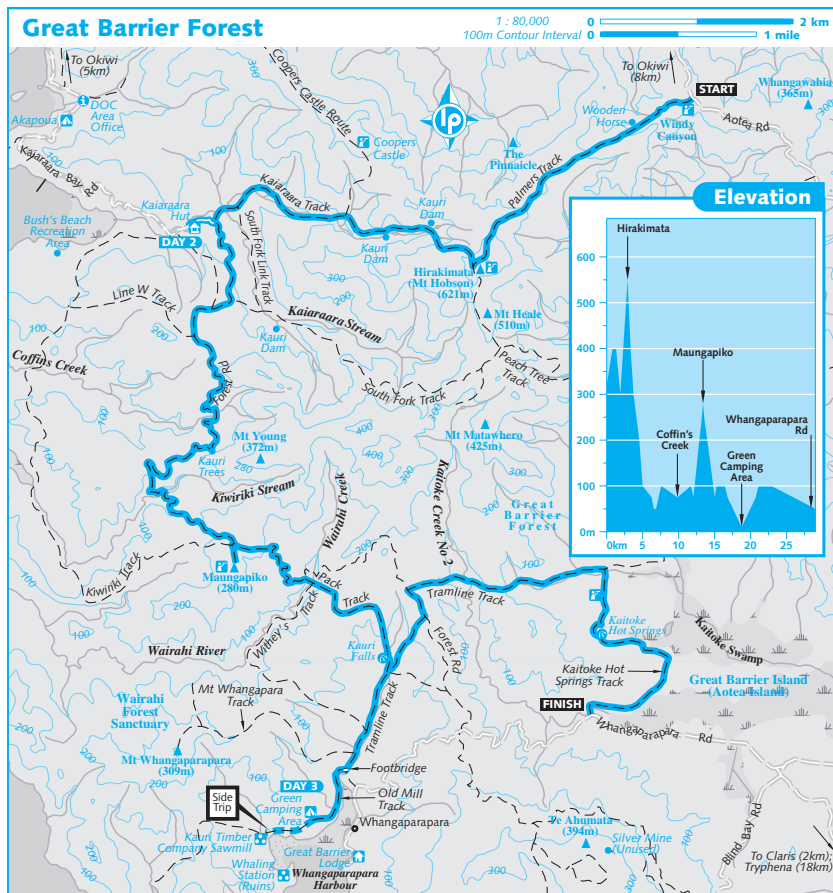
1km as you descend the steep west slope of the mountain, ending just before you arrive at the **upper kauri dam**, 20 minutes from the top. All that remains of the dam are a stack of large logs and rusting cables, but the view of the sheer rock walls of the gorge below is stunning. A track takes over and continues the descent, which at times can be a steep, rocky drop – be careful if it's raining! Within an hour of the upper dam you reach a short spur track (left) that descends to an observation platform at the **lower kauri dam**. This dam is impressive: a massive, wooden structure held in place across the gorge by huge kauri logs. When this dam was tripped the force of water sent the logs all the way to Kaiaraara Bay, where they were held in huge booms until being floated to sawmills in Auckland. These dams were constructed in 1926 and, amazingly after all the work to build them, were used for only three years.

The intriguing scenery continues just beyond the lower dam, when the track passes through a **nikau palm grove** that makes you feel you're in a true tropical wilderness. At this point the track improves remarkably, and within 15 minutes you cross a large suspension bridge and arrive at the junction with Coopers Castle Route (right) – it's a 45-minute climb along this track to a lookout. Kaiaraara Track (left) then arrives at the first of five fords across this branch of Kaiaraara Stream. Less than 15 minutes from Kaiaraara Hut, you ford the stream for the third time and pass the signposted junction with South Fork Link Track (left). Two more fords and Kaiaraara Track ends at Forest Rd. **Kaiaraara Hut** is just to the right (1½ hours from the lower dam). Built in 1973 by the old New Zealand Forest Service, the 30-bunk hut has been well cared for and is a pleasant place to spend an evening.

Day 2: Kaiaraara Hut to Green Camping Area

5–6 hours, 12km

There are two ways to reach Green Camping Area from Kaiaraara Hut. For the most part Kiwiriki Track is a walk in the bush, with side trails that lead to Kaiaraara and Kiwiriki Bays. The other way, Forest Rd, is the route described here. The old road was built in the 1950s to provide firefighters access to the island's rugged interior, and



today is closed to vehicles. This is a more scenic walk due to the mountain views and the large kauri trees enjoyed along the way.

From Kaiaraara Hut, return to Forest Rd and head right (the direction you arrived from the day before). The road takes you on a gentle climb and within 15 minutes (1km) passes a signposted junction with South Fork Track (left), which leads to Hirakimata/Mt Hobson four hours away. The climb continues and you'll see an impressive kauri tree along the road and then, high above, the stone fortress that is the peak of Mt Young (372m).

In less than an hour you reach the signposted junction with Line W Track (right) that heads west to Kiwiriki Track (25 minutes). Forest Rd descends to cross Coffins Creek, with a dark and lush grotto upstream, and then climbs to a signposted spur track leading to a pair of **kauri trees**, reached two hours (5km) from the hut. It's a short descent to these impressive giants, with one so large four people couldn't link arms around the trunk. It's hard to imagine that at one time most of Great Barrier Island was covered with trees like these.

The road descends to cross Kiwiriki Stream and then makes the longest climb of the day, a steady 30-minute (1.5km) march towards Maungapiko. You top out near Kiwiriki Track (right) and a short spur track to **Maungapiko**. The 280m rocky outcrop is a 20-minute side trip to good views of the island's west coast. Forest Rd descends to reach a junction with Pack Track (right), 30 minutes from the lookout. Note that Pack Track does not begin after Wairahi Creek, as shown on many maps.

Pack Track drops steeply to Wairahi Creek; on the other side is a junction with Withey's Track (right), a 1½-hour route to Whangaparapara. Pack Track is an easier approach, even though you have to climb over a ridge. Within 45 minutes the track merges into the Tramline Track at a signposted junction. Also at the junction is a short spur track to beautiful **Kauri Falls**, where a cascade drops 3m into a pool so inviting it's hard to pass up on a hot, humid day.

Follow Tramline Track right (southwest), crossing bridges over several small streams and passing signposted junctions to Withey's rack and the Mt Whangaparapara Track.

Within 30 minutes you arrive at a fenced paddock. Step over the fence and arrive at a junction just before a footbridge. Cross the swing bridge to reach Whangaparapara Rd and Great Barrier Lodge (p54) within 15 minutes.

To continue on to the Green Camping Area on the western shore of the harbour, follow Old Mill Track, signposted just before the footbridge. It's an easy 15-minute walk to the grassy meadow, where the DOC camping ground offers a view of the harbour, a rustic shelter and toilets.

SIDE TRIP: KAURI TIMBER COMPANY SAWMILL

30 minutes, 1.5km return

From the Green Camping Area a rough track continues west, climbing steeply over two ridges to reach the site of the **Kauri Timber Company sawmill**, the largest in the southern hemisphere in 1910. Today, all that remains are the concrete foundations, some pilings, and an old steam traction engine at various stages of preservation.

At low tide you can continue around the shore of a small bay for 30 minutes to the ruins of an old **whaling station**.

Day 3: Green Camping Area to Whangaparapara Road via Kaitoke Hot Springs

3 hours, 7km

This is a short day, but that is by design. If you're going to soak in the hot springs the last thing you want to do afterwards is tramp through mud or up steep hills – trust me.

Whether you're camping or staying at the lodge, return to the Tramline Track. Here it is easy to envisage this wide track as the old tramline that was built in the 1920s by the Kauri Timber Company to haul kauri logs out of the forest. You can still see old railroad ties embedded in the ground. Within 30 minutes the track passes a signposted junction with the Pack Track and then climbs steeply (160m in less than 1km) to Forest Rd.

Head north on the road for a short way, until you reach the signposted continuation of Tramline Track to the right (east). The wide track drops steeply through the rugged terrain to Kaitoke Creek No 2, ascends on the other side, and then descends again to a tributary of Kaitoke Creek No 1

(this is unnamed on most maps). It follows the stream, gradually dropping towards the eastern side of the island, until it arrives at a signposted junction for Kaitoke Hot Springs Track, less than two hours from either the camping ground or the lodge.

Kaitoke Hot Springs Track heads right (southeast) and immediately crosses Kaitoke Stream. It then climbs steadily to the tip of a ridge, where there are excellent views of Kaitoke Swamp, the surrounding ridges and the crashing surf of Kaitoke Beach to the east.

The track then drops sharply and swings east to the thermal stream and **Kaitoke Hot Springs** below, reached 20 minutes from the Tramline Track. The first dammed pool is rather muddy and uninviting, but tramp upstream and you will encounter others, half-hidden in a canopy of trees, which are much more delightful. All the pools have been created by visitors and generally silt up during heavy rain. Also remember there may be amoebic parasites present in the springs – *do not immerse your head in the hot water*.

From the thermal area, Kaitoke Hot Springs Track skirts **Kaitoke Swamp** as it swings southwest towards Whangaparapara Rd. Here the track is so well benched and gravelled that parents have known to use strollers on it. Within 40 minutes of the hot springs you emerge at Whangaparapara Rd, where there is a large display sign and a toilet.

KAUAERANGA KAURI TRAIL

Duration	2 days
Distance	14km
Track Standard	tramping & easy tramping tracks
Difficulty	easy-moderate
Start/Finish	Kauaeranga Valley Rd
Nearest Town	Thames (p61)
Transport	shuttle service
Summary	A tramp up the popular Kauaeranga valley, featuring a large number of logging and gold-mining relics.

The 740 sq km of rugged, forested hills that make up the reserves of the Coromandel Forest Park are northeast of Thames on the Coromandel Peninsula. The highest

point in the park is Mt Moehau (892m), located near the northern tip of the peninsula; Table Mountain (846m) is the highest point around Kauaeranga valley.

There are more than 30 tramps through Coromandel Forest Park, covering the area from the Karangahake Gorge (near Paeroa) to Cape Colville. The most popular region is the Kauaeranga valley, which cuts into the Coromandel Range behind Thames.

A logging boom took place in the Coromandel Range during the late 19th century, when stands of massive kauri were extracted. Today, like Great Barrier Island, Kauaeranga valley is filled with deteriorating reminders of its lumbering past: packhorse trails, tramway clearings, and many old kauri dams (see p60), including Tarawaere, Waterfalls, Dancing Camp, Kauaeranga Main, Moss Creek and Waterfalls Creek.

Due to the valley's popularity and proximity to Auckland, DOC has upgraded the tracks and added camp sites to what is now called the Kauaeranga Kauri Trail. For the more adventurous it is possible to hike from Pinnacles Hut to the Moss Creek camp sites, and then to Kauaeranga Valley Rd for a three-day circuit as described on p63. This is a demanding tramp that involves steeper climbs and considerable mud at times.

HISTORY

It is thought that the crews of canoes carrying early Polynesian settlers to New Zealand rested on the Coromandel Peninsula during their epic journey. In 1769, Captain Cook sailed into a rugged little inlet on the eastern shore of the peninsula. He raised the British flag over New Zealand for the first time and named the spot Mercury Bay (after the planet that appeared in the sky that night). The peninsula, however, takes its name from the HMS *Coromandel*, which visited in 1820, bringing with it the missionary Samuel Marsden.

Full-scale kauri logging began in the mid-1850s, and by the 1880s there were timber millers within the Kauaeranga valley. It was the gold rush at Thames that gave impetus to the local logging efforts, because of the sudden demand for building materials in the boom towns.

Kauri logging ended in 1928, and the state forest was declared in 1938, along

KAURI DAMS

The key to retrieving timber from the rugged areas of Great Barrier Island and the Coromandel Peninsula were the kauri dams. The first kauri stands to be felled were close to the sea, and on rolling country where bullock teams could easily haul logs out. But as demand for timber increased, it became necessary to log more difficult locations, such as the headwaters of the Kauaeranga valley. The problem of transporting logs to mills was overcome by the creation of reusable kauri dams.

The first dams were built before the 1850s and they remained the main feature of logging until 1930. The massive wooden structures were built across the upper portions of streams to trap water. For three months trees were cut and positioned in the creek bed, either above or below the dam catchment. When the water was high enough, a loose-plank gate in the middle of the dam was tripped and the sudden flood swept the timber through the steep and difficult terrain to the rivers below.

The loggers took advantage of flood conditions whenever possible, and if there were several dams on one creek, their trippings would be synchronised to maintain the momentum of the drive. Still, this type of timber driving was extremely wasteful, as logs were often damaged in the steep narrow ravines. It is estimated that between 1918 and 1928 more than 27.5 million metres of kauri was cut in the Kauaeranga valley, but only 23 million metres reached the booms at the end.

To withstand the weight of water and logs, many dam foundations were excavated into solid rock – one reason so many are still around today. Of the 70 dams that were built in Kauaeranga valley, remnants of one quarter of them can still be seen. Six of them can be seen on the Kauaeranga Kauri Trail. The best is the Dancing Camp dam, built in 1921 and restored in recent years, which is a five-minute walk from Pinnacles Hut. On Great Barrier Island the best kauri dam is on the north fork of Kaiaraara Stream.

with a program to re-establish the native bush.

ENVIRONMENT

Before it was logged, the Coromandel Peninsula had a rich variety of forest flora, which was unmatched by any other area of comparable size in the country. Now, much of the park is busy regenerating native bush, including kauri and rata – with the latter noted for its brilliant orange-red flowers. The Kauaeranga valley and its surrounding ridges are covered with podocarps and hardwoods, a few scattered pockets of kauri, and areas of bracken, fern and scrub. The predominant species around here are rimu and tawa, but you can also find miro, matai and kahikatea.

The peninsula's wildlife consists of many of the usual native New Zealand birds – tuis, bellbirds, kiwis, wood pigeons (*kereru*) and fantails – and introduced mammals, such as pigs, possums, goats, cats and mustelids (stoats, ferrets and weasels).

Various kinds of jaspers, petrified wood, rhodonite and agate are found in

or near most streams, which makes this place an excellent source of rare rocks and gemstones.

PLANNING When to Tramp

The forest park is only a two-hour drive from Auckland, so it can be busy much of summer. On weekends, Pinnacles Hut can be full. On weekdays from October to December and February to April, school and scout groups frequent the area. If possible go elsewhere during public holidays, or book a space in the hut or a camping ground (see opposite).

Maps & Brochures

The 1:150,000 Parkmap No 336-11 (*Coromandel Holidaymaker*) is handy for planning, but it does not show enough detail to be used while tramping. The best maps are in the 1:50,000 Topomap 260 series: almost all of this tramp is covered by T12 (*Thames*), with a small bit spilling over onto T11 (*Whitianga*).

Most of the tramps on the Coromandel Peninsula are outlined in the excellent

DOC pamphlet *Coromandel Recreation Information* (\$1), available from DOC offices and visitor information centres. The *Kauaeranga Kauri Trail* brochure (\$1) is also handy to carry, as it has information on the history, plants and geology of the area.

Hut & Camping Grounds

The only hut found on this track is also the solitary DOC hut on the peninsula – **Pinnacles Hut** (\$15). Built in 1995, the facilities at this 80-bunk Serviced hut are still state-of-the-art; it boasts gas stoves, a solid fuel heater, running water, mattresses, a barbecue and solar-powered lighting. The old hut is now used as a residence for a permanent hut warden.

The other option is to pack a tent, as DOC has installed a series of raised **camping pads** (per person \$7.50) at both Pinnacles Hut and Moss Creek.

Hut tickets and camping pads must be booked through the **DOC Kauaeranga Visitor Centre** (☎ 07-867 9080; Kauaeranga Valley Rd) before you begin tramping. Other DOC hut tickets and annual passes are not valid for the Kauaeranga Kauri Trail.

Information Sources

The **DOC Kauaeranga Visitor Centre** (☎ 07-867 9080; Kauaeranga Valley Rd) is in the Kauaeranga valley, about 13km from Thames. It has maps and brochures, and takes bookings for Pinnacles Hut and the Moss Creek camping ground.

Permits & Regulations

Open fires are not permitted anywhere along the tracks, and only in fire boxes provided in the Kauaeranga valley camping grounds. Permits are not required for mineral collecting, but interested rock hounds should make themselves aware of where the activity is allowed. No more than 2kg of rock can be removed per person, per day.

NEAREST TOWN & FACILITIES Thames

☎ 07 / pop 10,000

Founded in 1867, Thames serves as the Coromandel Peninsula's western gateway and the main service centre for people touring the peninsula.

INFORMATION

For general travel information there's the **Thames visitor information centre** (☎ 868 7284; www.thames-info.co.nz; 206 Pollen St). It has regional information and doubles as the InterCity bus depot.

SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT

Restock the food bag at **Pak'nSave** (☎ 868 9565; Mary St).

SLEEPING & EATING

Sunkist International Backpackers (☎ 0800-786 547, 868 8808; www.sunkistbackpackers.com; 506 Brown St; camp site for 2 \$28, dm \$19-23, d \$50; ☑) is a pleasantly relaxed hostel with free bikes, storage and on-site car rentals.

Gateway Backpackers (☎ 868 6339; www.gatewaybackpackers.co.nz; 209 Mackay St; dm/d \$20/46; ☑) is next to the Thames visitor information centre in the Art Deco former Imperial Hotel. It offers pack storage and transport to the Kauaeranga Kauri Trail (see p62).

Pollen St, one of the longest straight shopping streets in New Zealand, has plenty of takeaways and coffee lounges. Among them, **Food For Thought** (☎ 868 6065; 574 Pollen St; ☎ 6.30am-3.30pm Mon-Sat) has cakes, quiches and sandwiches, and popular **Sola Café** (☎ 868 8781; 720b Pollen St; ☎ 9am-9pm Wed-Sat, to 4pm Sun & Tue) has vegetarian options.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

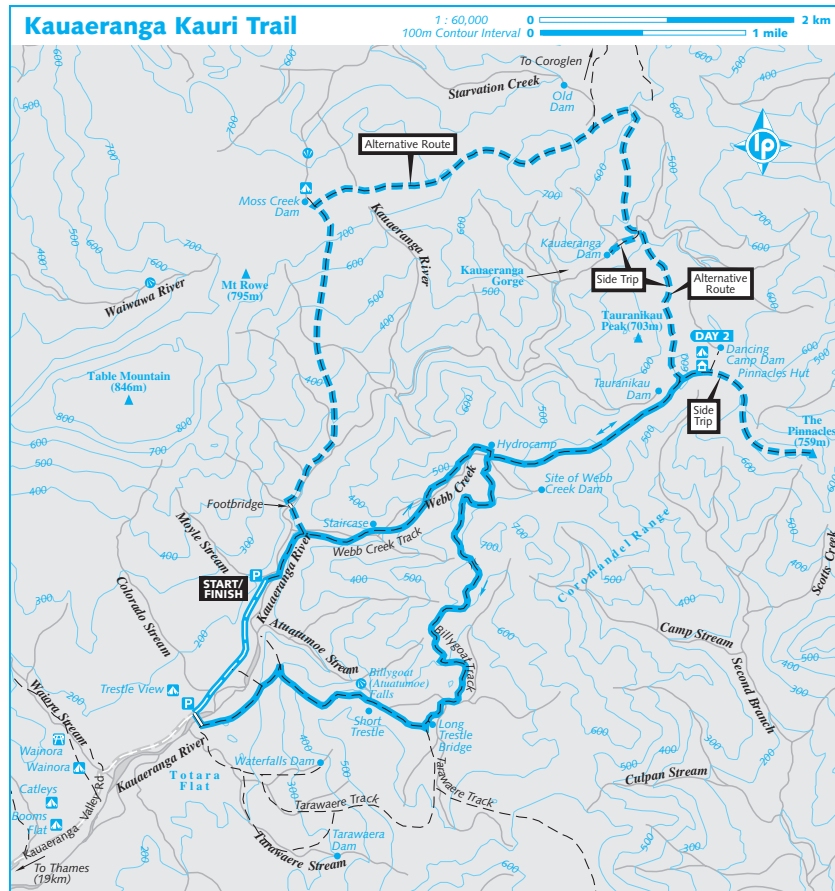
InterCity (☎ 09-623 1503; www.intercitycoach.co.nz) has daily buses from Auckland to Thames (\$23, two hours). In Thames, the InterCity booking agent is the visitor information centre. **Go Kiwi Shuttles** (☎ 0800 446 549, 866 0336; www.go-kiwi.co.nz) operates a door-to-door service from Auckland to Thames (\$26, two hours) and offers a 15% backpackers' discount to YHA, VIP and BBH members.

Kauaeranga Valley

There are eight **DOC camping grounds** (adult/child \$9/4.50) in the Kauaeranga valley, including several near the trailhead on Kauaeranga Valley Rd; all are self-registration facilities.

GETTING TO/FROM THE TRAMP

Sunkist International Backpackers (☎ 0800-786 547, 07-868 8808; www.sunkistbackpackers.com) offers transport to the trailhead (\$25) for guests staying at the hostel. The van arrives at the



trailhead at 9.30am daily and departs back to Thames at 4.30pm. **Gateway Backpackers** (☎ 07-868 6339; www.gatewaybackpackers.co.nz) also runs trampers out to the trail (\$20) whether or not you're staying there.

THE TRAMP

Day 1: Kauaeranga Valley Road to Pinnacles Hut via Webb Creek Track

3 hours, 7km, 380m ascent

The tramp begins at the far end of Kauaeranga Valley Rd (9km beyond the visitor centre), where you will see a large display sign offering directions. Follow the main track north, as it almost immediately crosses the Kauaeranga River by way of a suspended footbridge.

The main track then skirts the true left (east) bank of the river for 20 minutes, going through an impressive forest of rata, ferns and nikau palms. Just before Webb Creek is a signposted junction. The left fork heads north for Moss Creek.

Take the right fork (the main track), heading east towards Hydrocamp. An enormous amount of work has gone into upgrading this section of track and there are now bridges every time it crosses Webb Creek.

Just after the confluence of Webb Creek and Kauaeranga River, the track passes over a deeply worn staircase that was cut by gum diggers on their way to Coroglen (known as Gumtown). Beyond this the track follows Webb Creek, crossing it several times and

ascending sharply out of the valley. After crossing the last creek, the track follows an old packhorse route until it reaches **Hydrocamp**, a 1½- to two-hour trek from the trailhead.

Hydrocamp is a clearing built in the late 1940s by workers erecting power lines from Thames to Whitianga. It is also the site of a major junction for those walking back to Kauaeranga Valley Rd via Billygoat Track.

The track to Pinnacles Hut (left fork) is a continuation of the old packhorse track. It climbs onto an open ridge, where there are superb views of the Coromandel Peninsula's east coast and the rugged Kauaeranga valley. The track remains on the ridge for 45 minutes and eventually you're rewarded with a view of the Pinnacles forming a skyline straight ahead. One hour beyond Hydrocamp you reach a signposted junction. Take the right fork east towards the Pinnacles to arrive at **Pinnacles Hut** in 10 minutes. This 80-bunk hut is huge, but has been cleverly integrated into its scenic setting overlooking the headwater gullies of the Kauaeranga River, so it doesn't stand out at all. Nearby, but out-of-view, are the warden's quarters and camp sites with raised tent pads.

From the hut it's a five-minute walk down a side trail to **Dancing Camp Dam**. This was the second-largest kauri dam in the valley when it was built in 1921. It's also one of the best preserved after it was partially restored in 1994 with kauri timber that had washed downriver in a flash flood the previous year.

SIDE TRIP: THE PINNACLES

1½–2 hours, 3km return

From the hut a track swings southeast, becomes a marked route and in 50 minutes reaches the jagged summit of the **Pinnacles** (759m). The route to the top is steep but well signposted, and has ladders bolted in the rock face in some sections to assist you. The views from the summit are among the best in the area; you can see the entire Coromandel Peninsula, from Mt Moehau to Mt Te Aroha.

SIDE TRIP: KAUAERANGA GORGE

1½–2 hours, 3km return

Another interesting side trip from Pinnacles Hut is to Kauaeranga dam and gorge. You can tramp to these upper reaches of the

Kauaeranga River by returning to the main track on the ridge and heading north. Within about 45 minutes you descend steeply into the Kauaeranga valley and reach the river. When the river is low it's possible to hike down to **Kauaeranga gorge** by departing from the track and heading past **Kauaeranga dam**, 10 to 15 minutes downstream.

Built in 1912, the Kauaeranga was the largest dam constructed in the valley, but all that remains today is the floor and a few supporting beams. There are good swimming pools near the dam. Travel in the gorge should never be attempted when the river is swollen, and even at normal water levels it will involve tramping through waist-deep pools.

Day 2: Pinnacles Hut to Kauaeranga Valley Road via Billygoat Track

4 hours, 7km, 380m descent

Backtrack to Hydrocamp, an hour's tramp from Pinnacles Hut. At the signposted junction take the left fork to follow Billygoat Track, beginning with a 30-minute climb to a **saddle**, where there are excellent views down the Kauaeranga valley to the Hauraki plains. From here the tramp heads downhill, crossing the unbridged Atatumoe Stream along the way. About 1½ hours from Hydrocamp the track reaches the junction with the Long Trestle spur track (left fork); it's a five-minute walk to view the collapsed remains of the **Long Trestle bridge**, which at one time was 160m long and 11m high.

The main track swings northwest and follows the route of the Billygoat tramway down past the Tarawaere Track junction and the remains of **Short Trestle**, a bridge built for the tramway. Near here you'll enjoy some spectacular views of **Billygoat (Atatumoe) Falls** below you. Billygoat Track ends with a steep descent to the Kauaeranga River, which is crossed to reach Kauaeranga Valley Rd and the Tarawaere car park, about 1km down the valley from the end of the road. There is a swing bridge here for use during floods. From Hydrocamp, the tramp back to the road takes three hours.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: PINNACLES HUT TO KAUAERANGA VALLEY ROAD VIA MOSS CREEK

2 days, 12km

It's possible to return to Kauaeranga Valley Rd by way of Moss Creek. This is a more

demanding route for experienced trampers only, as the track is not as well maintained and graded as Webb Creek or Billygoat Tracks and involves considerable mud at times. The route should be broken in half with a night at Moss Creek camp site, otherwise it makes it a very long day (nine to 12 hours of walking).

From Pinnacles Hut, return to the ridge and head north, as per the Kauaeranga Gorge Side Trip (p63). This track runs along a power transmission line and eventually reaches Rangihau Rd to Coroglen. In three to four hours you reach a junction; head west along a track that can be very muddy and slippery.

Moss Creek is reached three to four hours from the junction. Once there was a hut here, but it burned down in 1993. In recent years DOC has installed raised camping pads and a rainwater tank for drinking water.

The final leg is a three- to four-hour descent from Moss Creek to a junction with the Webb Creek Track. This stretch is steep at times and, depending on the weather, muddy. Continue southwest along the Webb Creek Track, retracing your steps from Day 1 to the start of the tramp.

MORE TRAMPS

WAITAKERE RANGES Gibbons & Muir Tracks

This 11km loop begins in Whatipu p45 on Auckland's west coast. Gibbons Track is a 3.2km, two-hour tramp that traverses a ridge then descends to Muir Track, which you can follow for 2.3km to the coast and then beachcomb south to return to Whatipu. Plan on five to six hours for the loop, which includes a moderately difficult climb along Gibbons Track. Use the 1:50,000 Topomap 260-Q11 (*Waitakere*) or the 1:60,000 *Waitakere Ranges Recreation & Track Guide*; the latter is more current but does not include contour lines.

COROMANDEL PENINSULA Mt Moehau

You can get near the top of 892m Mt Moehau from a track that starts in Te Hope,

12km north of Colville on the Coromandel Peninsula. You need to be fit to make the four-hour climb to the sacred summit, which is Coromandel's highest point. The tramp should not be attempted in rain or low cloud. From near the top you get great views of the Hauraki Gulf and its islands, and the Coromandel. Trampers are no longer permitted to cross over the peak as it is Maori land that is a culturally sensitive area. Use the 1:50,000 Topomap 260-S10 (*Hauraki Gulf*).

Coromandel Walkway

This easy tramp around the scenic tip of the Coromandel Peninsula takes 2½ to three hours from Fletcher Bay (just east of Port Jackson) to Stony Bay (north of Point Charles). Many trampers then backtrack for a five- to six-hour walk and spend the night at **Fletcher Bay Backpackers** (☎ 07-866 6712; js.lourie@xtra.co.nz; dm \$20), which is practically next to the trailhead. The backpacker lodge is also a good source for information about the walkway. Use the 1:50,000 Topomap 260-T10/U10 (*Coromandel*).

FAR NORTH Cape Brett Track

The unusual **Cape Brett Track** (adult/child per day \$30/15) features the remains of a whaling station, ancient Maori pa (fortified village) sites and spectacular coastal views. But the highlight by far is the 14m-high Cape Brett Lighthouse, built in 1906, and its light-keeper's house, which has been converted into a 21-bunk **hut** (adult/child \$12/6). The track is a 20km, one-way tramp over undulating terrain, and is usually covered in eight hours. Because of its length, most trampers turn the walk into a three-day trip, with a spare day spent either at the lighthouse or walking Whangamumu Track to see the whaling station.

The track begins near Oke Bay, 29km from Russell along the Rawhiti–Ngaioitonga Rd. It's administered by **Cape Brett Walkway** (☎ 09-403 8823; www.capebrettwalks.co.nz). You can pay fees or obtain more information from **Russell visitor information centre** (☎ 09-403 9005; The Strand). Use the 1:50,000 Topomap 260-Q05 (*Bay of Islands*).

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